

UFMCC THROUGH THE DECADES

(The excerpts addressing 1960, 1970, and 1980 are taken from Rev. Elder Don Eastman's response to a questionnaire for the 1993 revision of the Polity course--edited by Rev. Dr. Mona West. The thoughts regarding the decade of the 1990's are presented as points for discussion only and represent the thoughts of Mr. Bernard Barbour, Summer Intern 1998.)

1960

First, it seems noteworthy that MCC was founded in 1968, during a period marked as pivotal and historic on several levels in the U.S. and world. The anti-war protest movement, the beginnings of liberation theology, the growing civil rights movement, the emerging feminist movement and the so-called "sexual revolution" were events that contributed to an atmosphere in which a new movement such as MCC, along with parallel gay/lesbian organizations, were born. Each of these movements also shaped the organizational culture of the UFMCC.

Within this early context, the UFMCC emerged as a counterculture movement which specifically challenged mainstream Christian religion on the point of human sexuality. Starting with Rev. Perry's very powerful founding vision--that one could be fully gay or lesbian and fully Christian at the same time--we began a journey, like Abraham and Sarah of old, knowing we were called by God and given God's promise but not sure where we were going.

1970

The 1970's were marked by events perceived as major progress for the gay/lesbian movement: a friendly President in the White House, remarkable growth of MCC, rebuff of Anita Bryant in Florida (despite the election outcome), and defeat of John Briggs in California. A surge of sodomy laws were rescinded and we ended the decade with a very rosy view of the future. The Board of Elders confidently announced, "The 80's Are Ours!" The theme of our 1979 General Conference, however, proved to be more prophetic: "Who knows whether you have come into the world for such a time as this?" While we met in Los Angeles, elsewhere in the community an epidemic was beginning: two years later in this city the first cases of AIDS were reported.

1980

The 1981 General Conference was, in my view, pivotal in our history. It was a moment that identified important boundaries. No longer would it remain acceptable in the culture of our Fellowship to embrace the oppressive traditions of language which have been foundational to the structures of sexism. But within the battle over inclusive



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language was a theological war. It was another Christological conflict. Some, wanted a more Unitarian bent to the doctrinal statement in UFMCC By-Laws. Another boundary was drawn. Jesus remained "God's only begotten Son." ✨

There were two other trends/events during the 1980/s which I hold as important. First, there was our application for membership in the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA. Secondly, I think it is important to note the influence of the Church Growth Movement on the UFMCC. This movement, although controversial among many theologians and with some in the UFMCC as well, has been very influential with many of our churches and has contributed much to the growth of our Fellowship.

1990

As we move into the 21st Century, I suggest a beginning list of some of the events within UFMCC and around the globe which will be important for our history and how we view the decade of the 1990's:

1. The telecommunications explosion
2. The end of apartheid in South Africa
3. The report of the Elders Task Force on Structures and Systems and the votes taken at Phoenix, AZ (1993) and Atlanta, GA (1995)
4. Purchase of a building for UFMCC International Headquarters
5. Growth of the Cathedral of Hope in Dallas, TX--a UFMCC mega-church. What does that mean for the UFMCC?
6. Change in AIDS testing, treatment, etc.
7. General Conference being held in Sydney, Australia (1997).

UFMCC POLITY

CLASS I. (Morning)

Video: God, Gays and the Gospel.

Lecture: UFMCC History (as recollected by Rev. Ragona).
(afternoon)

Readings: UFMCC Bylaws: To be read and discussed in class.

CLASS 2.

Essays:

1. If we indeed "affirm the priesthood of all believers" and our professional goal is empowerment of the laity, what is the role of the clergy in the church? (Do not write a bylaw job description! Respond from your experience, heart and mind, using any of the materials provided.)
2. How does the "3-pronged gospel" of UFMCC (Don't be Afraid Anymore, pp.31-42) fulfill the purpose of UFMCC as stated in the bylaws?
3. Define "ecclesiology." Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson claims that the National Council of Churches of Christ's refusal to allow UFMCC either observer or membership status for ecclesiological reasons is "bogus." She and Rev. Speranza identify several reasons to substantiate Rev. Wilson's charge. Explain at least five of those reasons.
4. Identify and explain the tasks James Tinney calls the UFMCC to perform in his address to the 10th General Conference. Have we or have we not met those tasks? Describe how we have met those tasks we have met, and why we have not met those we have not met.

CLASS 3.

Essays

5. Note parallels between Tinney's address and Sandmire and Perry's sermons. Discuss the connections between racism, sexism, and homophobia, and developing a theology of sexuality.
6. Based on FFO articles, discuss each:
 - What is theology and who does it?
 - How is theology done in UFMCC?
 - Formulate 5 questions you think are important for UFMCC's theology in the next millenium.
7. Develop a step-by-step document showing the process for a local church body to move from the status of New Work to Chartered Church. Include specific definitions and characteristics for each stage; who appoints and approves leadership at each stage; a time line for each; and the voting status/participation at District and General Conferences for each stage of development.

Be prepared to discuss how language, education, AIDS, ecumenism, women, race, and class have shaped UFMCC.